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FATHER BIARD'S RELATION OF 1616  
AND SAINT SAUVEUR

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BY E. C. CUMMINGS

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SAINT SAUVEUR.

BY REV. E. C. CUMMINGS.

*Read before the Maine Historical Society, December 7, 1893.*

MAINE is distinguished from the other eastern states by the fact that much of its early history belongs, not to New England, but to New France. The drama of French missions, for example, includes Maine in its theater east of the Kennebec; and Maine inherits an important record in this unique movement.

Here the story of religious enterprise is of a piece with the story of secular adventure. You cannot know one without the other. To teach Christianity to the savages was naturally enough part of the French programme of colonization and trade; but in this combination of spiritual and worldly aims different minds were actuated by different motives, and this was the source of much practical difficulty.

When his most Christian majesty, Henry iv, accorded special authority and privileges in America to the Sieur de Monts in 1603, it was with distinct reference to the conversion of the native tribes. And when the Sieur de Monts granted to the Sieur de Poutrincourt a territory and rights at Port Royal in Acadia, it was with a like reference to the establishment of Christianity in that territory.

The ideal of an expedition for combined colonization and propagation of the faith was one thing; the practical carrying out of the programme was quite



another thing. The favor of the church, of the court, of noblemen looking for a career of government, of honorable women to contribute vestments, plate and ornaments for forest chapels, — these were easily secured; but the more substantial sinews of enterprise and war, the venturing of property by merchants, the chartering of vessels and crews under definite terms of obligation, — here was something vastly more difficult to arrange with anything like a satisfactory precision; here was the ground of endless conflicts of sentiment, disputes of understanding, and warfare of practical methods. A manner of living in this new department of affairs had to be matured by experience; and it required a considerable time, with the failure of immature trials, to enable the representatives of religion to make friends among the representatives of "the mammon of unrighteousness," so as to secure anything like a permanent habitation on these inhospitable coasts.

Father Biard paid the penalty of being, with Father Ennemond Masse, the earliest of the Jesuit missionaries in New France. The penalty was that his mission was tentative and brief. His own story of it, the first of the Jesuit Relations, is interesting and instructive on this account. It is addressed in a letter to the king, and may be taken as a larger letter in a narrative form. Mr. Augustine Birrell, in *Res Judicatæ*, says: —

It is of the essence of letters that we should have the whole of each. I think it wrong to omit the merely formal parts. They all hang together. . . . Every letter a man writes is an

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incriminating document. It tells a tale about him. Let the whole be read or none.

This seems just in general, and it is gratifying that Doctor Alexander Brown of Virginia, has gone so far toward fulfilling the demands of justice with respect to Father Biard, in his "Genesis of the United States," whether the documents which he gives be reckoned as incriminating or justifying.

But, though belonging in a way to a letter, Father Biard's Relation has the character of an extended memoir, in which he speaks of himself in the third person, and may properly be quoted at least with respect to certain points of fact wherein justice or injustice to the author is not involved. Especially Father Biard's Relation may be taken as conclusive upon the chronology or topography of his mission. The Relation was published in 1616, after his return to France, and the last sentence of the preface is:—

It is now four years since I was sent thither (*i.e.*, to New France) by my superiors, and, God punishing my sins, I have since been carried away by the English, as I shall hereafter relate.

The good father's reference to his sins is too vague a confession to be used against him, and it must have seemed a benign punishment to find himself again, after four such years, in his native country.

In the experience of these four years Father Biard had gained much important information. He had acquired some familiarity with the coast, from Port Royal to the Kennebec; had had his attention especially attracted to Pentagoët, — a name which stands for the Penobscot, river and bay, — as well as for a

certain locality identified with Castine; had studied the climate of the country and the disposition of the inhabitants; had learned much of their domestic and industrial habits, their political arrangements, their religious notions; and had well appreciated the significance of great waterways to any intercourse or commerce with them. Indeed, he had found means of exchanging ideas with these people, great as was the difficulty of so doing on both sides. The secular priest, M. Flèsche, called "the patriarch," Father Biard's precursor in evangelistic efforts, had baptized a considerable number of natives without sufficient instruction, as it seemed to Father Biard, since most of them did not honor the faith they had professed; yet there was one, the Sagamore Membertou, who was an intellectual man and a serious Christian. There grew up a decided reciprocal confidence between him and the Jesuits, and Father Biard's portrait of this person is memorable:—

He often said to them [the Jesuits] "Learn our language; for when you have learned that you will teach me, and I having been taught shall become a preacher like you, and we will convert the whole country." The savages have no memory of any sagamore of grander character or more undisputed authority. He was bearded like a Frenchman, and would that all the French had been as well advised and discreet as was he.

The French adventurers of this period, however, were not all well-advised and morally-disciplined men. There were not wanting those who aggravated the pressure of the most trying conditions by selfish views and treacherous machinations. The human constitution, under the highest motives, is not equal to the

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strain of the most dangerous and disappointing undertakings. And when nothing came to pass according to the prospectus, how should not the sufferers be discontented with one another, and look for the attainment of their ends under other and more favorable auspices? This is enough to say now about the unhappy relations between Father Biard and his Jesuit coadjutor, and the secular adventurers with whom they were embarked.

The pious Madame de Guerchville, however, acting as their sympathetic providence at home, was determined that these self-sacrificing men should have an outfit of their own, and be established at some suitable place on a less precarious footing. From this came the tragic and fatal episode of Saint Sauveur.

Saint Sauveur has come into history,<sup>1</sup> and into the materials of history, to say nothing of popular tradition, in so many connections that I should have little or nothing to say about it were it not for the hope that, by holding very closely to Father Biard's Relation, as that of an eye-witness, we might be able to correct some inexact representations of even the most respectable writers.

In Williamson's history of Maine, volume I, page 206, we are told in reference to Father Biard and his companions: —

It is supposed the place of residence selected by the missionaries was on the western side of the pool, a part of the sound which stretches from the southeasterly side to the heart of the island. Here they constructed and fortified an habitation,

<sup>1</sup> Particularly in Parkman's *Pioneers of France in the New World*, Chap. vii.

planted a garden, and dwelt five years, entering with great zeal and untiring perseverance upon the work of converting the natives to Christianity.

There is no indication that this extract owes anything to Father Biard's Relation; but a sentence in Bancroft's History of the United States, ninth edition, volume I, pages 27, 28, evidently does owe something to it, only in justice to Father Biard the debt should have been considerably greater. Bancroft says:—

A French colony within the United States followed, under the auspices of de Guerchville and Mary of Medici; the rude intrenchments of Saint Sauveur were raised by de Saussaye on the eastern shore of Mount Desert Isle. The conversion of the heathen was the motive to the settlement; the natives venerated Biard as a messenger from heaven; and under the summer sky, round a cross in the center of the hamlet, matins and vespers were regularly chanted. France and the Roman religion had appropriated the soil of Maine.

The reader of Bancroft is allowed to enjoy this idyllic picture till more than a hundred pages further on, when Captain Argal appears upon the scene.

It is well to pay strict attention to the somewhat scanty dates given by Father Biard. He embarked from Dieppe the sixth of January, 1611, and did not reach Port Royal till the twenty-second of June, the same year; which gives occasion for the pleasantry, that after all their tedious delays they set sail too soon for arriving so late. At the end of the following August they were ready for other voyagings, which brought them to the Kennebec the last of October; thereabout they continued till the fourth or fifth of November, when they directed their course toward

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Pentagoët, on their way to winter quarters at Port Royal. At Pentagoët they met an assemblage of eighty canoes and a long-boat, with three hundred natives. Soon after, date not given, they arrived at Port Royal, where it is said the snow began to fall the twenty-sixth of November; and, what was worse, their provisions began to grow short. With impaired health and many difficulties arising under the management of the *Sieur de Biencourt*, the prospect before the Jesuit fathers was not a cheerful one. But with hope of succors from home they made what cheer they could. The third Sunday after Christmas Father Biard read the Gospel, where it says, "They have no wine," and making a pleasant application of the text to the listeners, prayed the *Sieur de Biencourt* to dispense a little of the little that remained, in the assurance that their succors would soon reach them. Father Biard's words proved prophetic; for just eight days afterward a ship arrived. This was the twenty-third of January, 1612.

No vessel ever brought fresh supplies to these adventurers that did not bring fresh occasion for distrust and disputes. But after disposing of their difficulties as best they could, the Fathers addressed themselves with great zeal to learning the language of the savages. Father Ennemond Masse, with a lively young man who acted as his companion and helper, departed into the woods with the savages, leading their life almost to the destruction of his own, and was long out of all communication with Father Biard. At length, however, he learned the secret of accommodating his

constitution to their ways, and finally returned, safe and sound, loaded with merits and good works.

Father Biard had attached himself more immediately to the explorations of Biencourt and his followers, but was still on the alert, by ingenious and hardy experiments, to cultivate intercourse with the people, whose conversion he had at heart. And so the year 1612 was wrought into labors unique in their kind, and passed in the endurance of privations and dangers peculiar to their own time and place in the history of untamed nature and savage men.

The Jesuits did not take stock in all of Biencourt's illusive expectations of supplies from France. So in the winter of 1613, while he was wondering where he should bestow all that he was going, by and by, to receive, they were prudently husbanding their own stores; and when he was aghast at the near prospect of famine, they were able to produce for the wants of the little colony fourteen barrels of good grain. Moreover, in the dead season, to the infinite amusement of their comrades sitting around the fire, our two priests set about making a boat (*une chaloupe*). They had for master workman their boy of all work, the rawest of apprentices; the lookers-on remarked that Father Masse knew how to do everything, as occasion required, was a good wood sawyer, a good calker, a good architect; but, said they, "Father Biard, what's he good for?" "As to that," said another, "don't you know, when the shallop is finished, he will give it his benediction?" By the middle of March the shallop was finished, and was a bless-

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ing indeed, since no fishing or search for roots, acorns, or other edibles by land could be carried on without a boat; and Biencourt, who had been in possession of three good ones, was reduced to a wretched skiff for three persons at the most, so leaky that it could hardly be counted upon for three leagues in the sea without filling. The Fathers not only achieved the building of their boat, but they put it to its appropriate use in the interest of their company.

Thus the winter of 1613 wore away; and meanwhile the Jesuits were not forgotten by Madame de Guercheville and their other patrons in France. An outfit was provided for removing them from Port Royal to another place more suited to their mission. The chief of this outfit was Captain la Saussaye, who had with him thirty persons engaged to winter in Acadia, counting the two Jesuits and their servant, whom they were to take on board at Port Royal. He had, in addition, two other Jesuits, Father Quentin and Father Gilbert du Thet; but these two were to return to France, provided the two they were expected to find at Port Royal were not dead, as it was feared they might be. The whole outfit, counting the sailors, made up forty-eight persons. It was thought to be a well-manned and richly-provisioned expedition. It set sail from Honfleur, March 12, 1613.

May 16, 1613, is a very important date; it is the point from which we have to reckon the time of the critical events, which came in rapid succession directly afterward. This was the day of la Saussaye's landing at Cape la Have, on the side of Nova Scotia opposite

to Port Royal. It might have taken some days to sail round the peninsula to that place, but the date of reaching it is not set down.

At Port Royal there were found five persons, namely, the two Jesuits and their servant, the apothecary Hebert, and one other. The Sieur de Biencourt and the rest of his people were all far away, some in one direction, some in another. As Hebert held the place of Biencourt in his absence, the Queen's letters were presented to him, by which he was commanded to release the Jesuits and permit them to go wherever it might seem to them good. Thus the Jesuits took away their luggage in peace; and therefore for that day and the following they made good cheer for Hebert and his companion, in order that this arrival might not be too sad for them. At the departure also, although they were not in destitution, a barrel of bread was left them and some flagons of wine, so that the leave taking also was with good grace.

They were detained at Port Royal by contrary winds for five days, when with an encouraging breeze from the northeast they set sail, intending to reach the river Pentagoët, and a place called Kadesquit, which had been destined for their new abode, as having many and great advantages. Soon, however, the weather changed. They were wrapped in fog so thick that they could see as little by day as by night; they were tossed about for two days and two nights, in terror of rocks and breakers, veering now to this side and then to the other. In their affliction they made their prayers to God that he would deliver them

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from their perils, and direct them to some good place for his glory.

Of his goodness, adds Father Biard, he heard us, for that very evening we began to see the stars. In the morning the vapors were dissipated, and we found ourselves to be before Mount Desert (*au devant des Monts deserts*), an island which the savages call Pemetic. The pilot steered for the eastern side of the island, where he brought us to a berth (*nous logea*) in a beautiful and ample port, and we returned our thanks, raising the cross and chanting our praises to God with the sacrifice of the holy mass. We called this place and port Saint Sauveur.

"The eastern shore of Mount Desert Isle" — this is Mr. Bancroft's topography, and it is perfectly correct up to a certain point. On the eastern shore was the first named Saint Sauveur, the Saint Sauveur of the landfall, the planting of the cross, and the celebration of the mass — ample warrant, no doubt, for the naming of a church or a hotel in our modern Bar Harbor. But there was another Saint Sauveur, the Saint Sauveur of the settlement, leagues away from the first, where alone the "rude intrenchments" and other details of Mr. Bancroft's picture, according to Father Biard, could have found place. This is what the Relation sets forth with great distinctness in the next chapter, the twenty-fourth, which is so definite and conclusive that I give it entire. The title of the chapter is important as showing that they carried on the name Saint Sauveur to the place chosen for their residence: —

THE OCCASION OF OUR DECIDING TO STAY AT SAINT SAUVEUR:  
THE EXCELLENCE OF THE PLACE.

Now in this port of Saint Sauveur a great dispute arose between the sailors and the rest of our company, or those others of

us who were passengers. The occasion of it was that the charter-party and agreement passed in France, setting forth that the said sailors should be holden to anchor in a port of Acadia which we should name to them, and there to remain during three months,—the said sailors contended that they had already arrived in a port of Acadia, and that consequently the said term of three months should be reckoned from this arrival. It was answered that this port was not the one that had been named to them, to wit, Kadesquit, and therefore the time could not be counted before we should be there. The pilot was firm in the contrary opinion, maintaining that a ship had never been to Kadesquit, and that he would not make himself a discoverer of new routes. Arguments on this side; arguments on that side. Nothing but pleadings at the bar—a bad augury for the future.

During these contests the savages made signal to us with a smoke. This means that some one is going to recognize them in case he wants anything of them; and so it was done. The pilot, as the occasion permitted, told them that the Fathers of Port Royal were in his ship. The savages replied that they would most gladly see those whom they had known two years ago at Pentagoët. It was Father Biard who went at once to find them, and to gain information of them touching the route to Kadesquit, intimating that he wished to take up his abode there. "But," said they, "if you are determined to make your residence in these regions, why not rather stay with us. We certainly have as large and as good a place as Kadesquit." And they began to recount the praises of their neighborhood, declaring it to be so healthy and agreeable that the savages in other quarters, when they fall sick, have themselves brought to this place, and get well. These encomiums did not move Father Biard very much, as he knew well enough that the savages were not lacking in what everybody has in abundance—value for their own commodities. But they were at no loss how to adjust their machinery for taking him along: "for," said they, "you must come, because Asticou, our sagamore, is sick unto death. If you do not come he will die without baptism, and will not go to heaven. You will be the cause of it; for he is heartily desirous to be bap-

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tized." This reason so shrewdly set forth surprised Father Biard, and fully persuaded him to accompany them, especially as there were only three leagues to traverse, and the whole would involve no great loss of time, merely an afternoon. So he took his place in one of their canoes, with the Sieur de la Motte and Simon the interpreter, and on they sped.

Arrived at the cabins of Asticou, we found him sick, to be sure, but not unto death, for it was only a cold that was troubling him. The assurance of his strength, therefore, gave us ample leisure for going on a visit to this place, so highly extolled, and better than Kadesquit as a residence for the French; and, verily, we found that the savages were not without good reason for their high praises, for we ourselves were in wonder over it. So that, having carried the news to the principal men of our company, and they also having come to reconnoiter, all without dissent agreed that we should make our settlement there, and not seek for anything better, seeing that God even seemed to say the same by the pleasing occurrences that had met us, and by a certain miracle which he had wrought in the healing of an infant, of which we shall speak elsewhere.

This place is a pleasing slope, gently rising from the sea, and bathed on its two sides by two springs. The land is clear of trees to the extent of twenty or twenty-five acres, and covered with grass in some places almost to the height of a man. Its aspect is to the south and east, like that at the mouth of the Pentagoët [a possible reminiscence here of the lay of the land at the Castine peninsula], and looking to where several attractive brooks, abounding in fish, discharge themselves. The soil is dark, rich and fertile. The port and harbor are the finest that one could behold, and so situated as to command the whole coast; especially the harbor is secure as a lake, for besides its being inclosed (*separé*) by the great island of Mount Desert, it is also shut in by certain little islands, that break the force of the waves and winds and fortify its entrance. There is no fleet that it could not hold, nor ship of such draught as not to be able to approach within a cable's length of the shore for discharging her cargo. It is in latitude forty-four degrees and one-third, a situation less northerly than that of Roubaux.

Having disembarked in this place, and here planted the cross, we set to work, and with the work began our wranglings (*contestations*), a second signal and portent of our evil destiny. The occasion of these wranglings was that our captain, la Saussaye, amused himself too much in cultivating the ground, while all the principal men pressed him not to divert the laborers to that object, but to direct them all without interruption to dwellings and fortifications. This he would not do. And from these contests arose others, till the English reduced us to harmony, as you will see.

Mr. Parkman, "Pioneers of France in the New World," page 277, remarks in a note: —

Biard says the place [described above] was only three leagues from Saint Savior, and that he could go and return in an afternoon. He adds that it was *séparé de la grande Isle des Monts Deserts*. He was evidently mistaken in this, Saint Savior being on the east side of Mount Desert; there is no place separated from it, and answering to his description, which he could have reached within the time mentioned. He no doubt crossed Mount Desert Sound, which, with Soames' Sound, nearly severs the island. There, about a mile from the open sea, on the farm of Mr. Fernald, is a spot perfectly answering to the minute description of Biard. . . . I am indebted to E. L. Hamlin, Esquire, of Bangor, for pointing out this locality.

My impression is that when this note was made, the historian, whose eyes, alas, are now closed upon the scenes he did so much to illustrate, had not visited the localities in question; for the note, if I understand it, is inexact in several respects: — (1) It was not "the place" of settlement, but Asticou's camp, that was three leagues away from Saint Savior, a loose estimate, of course, suited to encourage the priest to visit the sick sagamore; and from Asticou's camp they went on to explore the place so



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much praised for their settlement. (2) It was not "the place" thus chosen, according to Father Biard, which was "separated from the great island of Mount Desert," but the harbor, the unique haven for ships; this haven, with all the convenient ports it contained, was indeed separated from the great island, and set apart in the very heart of it by granite walls, when the decree was uttered, "Let the waters under the heaven be gathered together unto one place, and let the dry land appear." Here is Father Biard's description verbatim: — *Le port et haure sont des plus beaux que l'on puisse voir, et en endroict propre à commander toute la coste; le haure specialement est assuré comme un estang, car outre qu'il est séparé de la grande isle des Monts deserts, il l'est encore de certaines petites islettes qui rompent les flots et les vents, et fortifient son entrée.* (3) This is a cosmical situation, of large elements, about which, as I read him, Father Biard is as distinctly verifiable as with reference to the minute features of the very spot where they pitched their tents. Naturally, his course by canoe was the one of to-day from Bar Harbor in the direction of North East Harbor, and from Asticou's place, which might have been east of North East Harbor to Fernald's Point, where the two springs still bathe the two sides of the pleasing slope, and with the neighboring brooks on either side of the bay, identify beyond question the site of the Saint Sauveur settlement.

It seems the most natural thing in the world that, after the perils and discomforts of the voyage Captain la Saussaye should have found delight in the hospita-

ble wilderness, the bold mountains and ample harbor, the natural meadow with its lush grass to be made into hay for the horses and goats they had brought ; or should have fancied, notwithstanding the advance of the season, that some vegetables might be grown for their winter consumption. No doubt he laughed good-naturedly at arguments from fear. Were not the natives friendly, and what had that obscure Jamestown colony, hardly born and so far away, to do with their peaceful adventure, when France and England were not at war ? Especially how should he suppose that the English flag could cover, not merely colonial jealousy, but the craft and violence of the freebooter also ?

But one fine morning his eyes were opened. His little navy was at anchor, the sails spread as awnings over the decks, his followers busy here and there in the ship or on the shore, their tents and huts getting ready to be dwelt in, and their abundant stores from France disposed, according to the situation, when in sailed Captain Samuel Argal, with a breeze exactly to his mind, swift as an arrow, with an abrupt message of death, devastation and dispersion, belched from the muzzles of fourteen cannon and sixty muskets. There was no defense. Father du Thet was wounded, died the next day, and was buried at the foot of the great cross ; two young men of promise were drowaed, having leaped from their boat to swim ashore, and their bodies were found nine days after ; others were wounded, their vessels were seized, their stores pilaged, and their whole enterprise rendered as sim-

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ply foreign and impracticable as if Pentagoët and Kadesquit and Mount Desert Isle had stood for regions beyond the western stars. Their anguish was unspeakable; they had not where to lay their heads; and the one preoccupation of forty-five plundered Frenchmen was to win from an enemy, of whom they expected nothing but death or servitude, some scanty furtherance to their forlorn hope of getting back to France. Happily Captain Argal showed a humanity superior to his own conduct and better than their fears. And so, through various adventures and in different groups, most of the unfortunate pioneers of Saint Sauveur lived to tell the story to their friends.

Exactly at what date the settlement at Saint Sauveur was begun, or how long, in the words of Mr. Bancroft, "matins and vespers were regularly chaunted" round the cross, on Fernald's Point, we cannot say. The dates which include this period of happy seclusion were May 16, 1613, already mentioned, when the ship from Honfleur landed at Cape la Have, and November 9, 1613, when Argal left Port Royal, with Father Biard among his passengers, after he had sailed from Saint Sauveur to Virginia, remained there for some time, and then sailed back again to complete, at his leisure, not only what was lacking to the devastation of Saint Sauveur, but also the utter destruction of Saint Croix and Port Royal, by way of vindicating English pretensions. Here, then, are nearly six months distributed, we may judge in what proportions, between the voyage from la Have to Port Royal, the getting away from that place, the voyage

to Mount Desert, and the preparations for settlement, the trial and development of their chosen situation, the period of invasion and pillage, the voyage to Virginia and detention at Jamestown, the return voyage to Saint Sauveur, Saint Croix and Port Royal, including the deliberate maturing and execution of plans in detail. The French might possibly have had weeks of tranquillity and hope at Saint Sauveur. Could they have had months? At any rate, looking back to that island sanctuary, that summer of 1613, that English conquest, the type of subsequent history, we may say of the Jesuit experience in New France, "Here endeth the first lesson." The next movement was by way of the Saint Lawrence and Quebec.

When we think how centuries drop into the æons of vaster history, and how all experience of even the remote past belongs to that prophetic ministration, without which even such fulness of life as we enjoy would not have come to us, a scene of peculiar activity and suffering becomes interesting to us much as we fancy it was interesting, or even is now interesting, to those whose story it commemorates. Hence it is with peculiar associations that I recall the ready and intelligent hospitality with which, on the second of August, 1893, an inquiring company, of which I was one, was received by Professor C. H. Fernald, of Amherst College, and by his son, Professor H. T. Fernald, of the State College, Center County, Pennsylvania, with their families, on this historic ground called by their name. They had exchanged their scientific preoccupations for a summer of more secure peace



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and saving health than was found in the Saint Sauveur  
 of two hundred and eighty years before; and as I rec-  
 ollect how they walked with us over Flying Mountain,  
 pointed out the two springs, the gentle slopes with  
 aspects southward and eastward, the islands at the  
 harbor's entrance, breaking the winds and waves for a  
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 in all the world; I confess that I am no longer con-  
 cerned to find out the archæological value of ancient  
 cellars and millstones, interesting as they are. I leave  
 them together with Williamson's five years of great  
 zeal and untiring perseverance in "converting the  
 natives to Christianity" to the peaceful limbo of pop-  
 ular tradition, content with our certitude as to the site  
 of Saint Sauveur.